

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

The Right of Nations?

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12 (Philosophy; Historical essay exercise in writing) **Very High Level**

Objectives: The student will:

- Read and prepare a set of key notes on a series of diplomatic documents
- Develop a coherent essay to a document-based question related to the documents
- Evaluate said essays using a historical essay criteria sheet

Time: 2 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1862** *The Right of the Nation to Defend Itself*
1862 *Treaty Between the United States and Great Britain for the Suppression of the Slave Trade*

Paper and pen for writing the essay (no pencil)
Paper and pencil for making notes sheet

Resources: *Historical Essay Evaluation Criteria*

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

Historians often cite different social, economic, and political reasons as causes of the American Civil War. This lesson will ask students to go beyond the “facts” into a deeper, more philosophical analysis of the war and its causes. They will study two key documents and develop a coherent historical essay answering a question posed by the documents.

Such an essay requires skill in analyzing, putting together key ideas, using evidence from the documents, and writing the essay to fit a given criteria. It is then helpful for students to read each other’s arguments to further enhance their own analytical and writing skills.

Pre Lesson:

Take both documents and number the lines before making copies for each student. Tell the students that they will be given documents to read and respond to in a written exercise the following day, and to bring their best pens.

Before the students return to the classroom, write the Historical Essay question on the board:

If foreign powers intervene in the civil wars of other nations, would such interference eventually lead to the dissolution of all political society? In your essay argue both sides of the question including economic, social, and political consequences. Be sure to summarize your arguments and provide a strong conclusion of your stance on the question.

Day One Procedures

1. Place the two numbered documents on each student's desk.
2. Direct students to read the documents and respond to the question on the board in the form of a full historical essay (a minimum of 2–3 pages, depending on class ability.)
3. Students should use references from the documents for their "argument" by citing lines and names of documents or citing direct passages in quotes from the documents.
4. This activity is difficult and it should take them the whole class period.
5. Requirements include in ink, correct grammar, correct historical essay format, and especially a strong conclusion.

Day Two Procedures

1. After several days, divide the class into groups of seven (7) and give each group seven essays with the name of the writer covered in some fashion so that no one knows who wrote the essay.
2. Select a table leader who will distribute the essays to the other students. Each person in the group will read all seven essays and will put a score on the back. If there are inconsistencies in the scores, the table leader will discuss to reach a consensus on the rating of the essay.
3. The teacher will eventually return the essays to their authors after recording the grade given by the team. Discuss any questions they may have about the essays or the historical context. ■